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Postprint / Postprint

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

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### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Scourfield, J., & Davies, A. (2005). Children's accounts of Wales as racialized and inclusive. *Ethnicities*, 5(1), 83-107.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796805049927>

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Vol 5(1): 83–107; 049927  
DOI:10.1177/1468796805049927  
www.sagepublications.com

## Children's accounts of Wales as racialized and inclusive

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**ABSTRACT** The article is a discussion of the aspects of children's accounts of Welshness that are either racialized or inclusive. The empirical basis is a qualitative research project on children's national and local identities in Wales, conducted with 8–11 year olds in six primary schools across the country, with schools selected to provide diversity of region, language, social class and ethnicity. This article focuses on the aspects of the children's talk that highlight 'race' and the position of minority ethnic children within Wales. There is discussion of Welshness as racialized, children's views on being white and on being a minority, and evidence of inclusivity amongst children. We found aspects of the children's talk that pose a barrier to the development of an inclusive Welsh citizenship and also aspects that support it. There is consideration of children's agency in the construction of nationhood and the limited repertoires they can draw on for this process.

**KEYWORDS** childhood ● ethnic minorities ● national identity ● Welshness ● whiteness

This article deals with children's accounts of Welshness. In particular we consider the aspects of these accounts that are either racialized or inclusive. In writing of racialization, we refer to 'a dialectical process by which meaning is attributed to particular biological features of human beings' (Miles, 1989: 76). The article arises from a qualitative study of children's national and local identities in Wales. This project was concerned with ethnicity, according to Richard Jenkins's definition of an ethnic group as based on 'the *belief* shared by its members that, however distantly, they are

of common descent' (Jenkins, 1997: 9–10). In this article we focus specifically on the aspects of the children's talk that highlight 'race' and the position of minority ethnic children with Wales.

There is a wealth of published psychological research on the development of group identity and prejudice in children. This work is part of the staple diet of both developmental and social psychologists (see the review by Aboud and Amato, 2001). There is also published sociological research on children's interactions as racialized. Recent interesting examples in relation to young children are the monographs by Connolly (1998) and Van Ausdale and Feagan (2002). We do not claim to be breaking new conceptual ground with our article, but rather we are presenting some original data on Wales and Welshness that are interesting in their own right. Although there was initial psychological research on children's views on the nation published decades ago (Piaget and Weil, 1951), this field has only expanded within and beyond psychology more recently (see Carrington and Short, 1995; Stephens, 1997a; Barrett, 2000; Holloway and Valentine, 2000; Howard and Gill, 2001; Meek, 2001). This work forms the context to our research with children in Wales.

Traditional approaches to children, 'race' and nation have emphasized development over time, either in terms of the cognitive and social development of children (from psychological research) or socialization (from sociological research). More recently, some researchers have emphasized children's agency, sophistication at an early age and the role of social interaction in the negotiation of 'race', in keeping with broader trends in the sociology of childhood (see, for example, Connolly, 1998 and Van Ausdale and Feagan, 2002). This work has shown the interactions of very young children to be highly racialized. There has been considerable research interest in recent years in various aspects of social identities, and the potential for identities in late modernity to be fluid, individualized and creative has been recognized in social scientific writings for some time. Mac An Ghaill's research shows how minority ethnic young people as well as adults can construct 'new syncretic versions of transculturally based identities' (Mac An Ghaill, 1999: 148). As Song (2003) illustrates, there is an element of choice in contemporary ethnic identities, but this choice is also constrained in a racialized society. Williams (1999b) notes that there has been considerable research attention to metropolitan ethnicities, but that much less is known about the minority experience in largely white communities (although see Connolly and Keenan, 2002; Scourfield et al., 2002). Outside of its Southern coastal cities, Wales is made up of very largely white communities. There is a very small minority ethnic population across much of the country.

Children are clearly important to any attempt at nation building. There is some conscious nation building going on in Wales at present, as the country has recently gained a measure of self-government in the form of a



National Assembly. Stephens (1997b) has observed that constructions of children can be pivotal in the structuring of modern nation states. One obvious way in which politicians can attempt to influence children's views of the nation is the school history curriculum (see Phillips, 1998). Any nationalist vision will require the co-option of children. In Wales, Welsh medium education is increasing, in an attempt to make a more fully bilingual nation, and this is having a certain effect, as can be seen in the rise in numbers of Welsh-speaking children between the 1981 and 2001 censuses. There are youth organizations that operate within nationalist discourses: for example, the British nationalism of the Guiding and Scouting movement and the cultural Welsh nationalism of *Urdd Gobaith Cymru* (Welsh youth league). Stephens (1997b) notes that the work on children and the nation in her special edition of the journal *Childhood* explores how certain constructions of childhood have been shaped by, have legitimated or challenged particular constructions of the nation, but that few of the articles present empirical material on how children understand their identities in relation to nationalist visions. Our article is an attempt to do this in relation to Wales. A crude version of the importance of children to the nation might imply that they can be passively socialized into one dominant nationalist discourse. This is, of course, wide of the mark. Recent work on the sociology of children has shown how children are social actors who shape their environments as well as being shaped by them (James et al., 1998; Prout, 2001). Children are part of the debates about the nation and are involved in supporting or contesting dominant messages about belonging.

We have already made some comment about the originality of the article. To further clarify, there has been considerable work done on various aspects of national identity in Wales (see, for example, Fevre and Thompson, 1999) but the position of ethnic minorities has not been to the fore in much of this work. There is simply not much available in the way of data on the minority ethnic experience in Wales, although that is gradually improving (see the recent collection by Williams et al., 2003). Although there has been considerable academic discussion of Welshness, Englishness and Britishness, there is a lack of data on people talking about Welshness that is analysed in terms of the racialization of ethnic minorities (Day, 2002). Our discussion is specifically about Wales and Welshness, although we also draw on more of the children's more general talk about ethnicity where appropriate.

## ETHNICITY IN WALES

Wales is a nation within the United Kingdom with a population of just under 3 million (out of 58 million in the whole UK). It is a relatively poor

country in comparison with England and Scotland and is often thought to be marginal within dominant notions of Britishness. Hechter (1975) characterized Wales's relationship with the British state to be one of internal colonialism, although this was a controversial claim at the time and many commentators remain unconvinced (Day, 2002). Around 20 percent of the population of Wales speak the Welsh language. This language gives Wales an obvious claim to cultural distinctiveness, but its significance to Welsh identity is highly contested. As would be expected in the context of the global dominance of the English language, the Welsh language struggles to be other than a private low status language, but the last few decades have witnessed some recovery of its status (May, 2001).

The 2001 census shows the ethnic origin of the Welsh population to be 97.9 percent white. Cardiff has 8.4 percent minority ethnic population and much of Wales, with the exception of Cardiff, Newport and Swansea, is around 98–99 percent white. Wales is in one respect more cosmopolitan in terms of people's origins than most of Britain, however, because of the large number of people born in England who live there (Giggs and Pattie, 1992). In terms of the politics of identity and belonging, the Welsh language tends to predominate in public debate. Charlotte Williams (1999a) notes that in some ways 'race' is less of an issue in Wales than England precisely because Welsh identity is so contested. There is less of a sense that there is something clear and well defined under threat than in some other parts of the UK. Williams has been prominent in problematizing ethnicity in Wales within the sociological literature and highlighting the marginalization of black and minority ethnic people from so many versions of the Welsh nation. She dispels the myth that contrasts warm, accepting proletarian Wales with cold imperialist upper-middle-class England (Williams, 1995, 1999b).

There is some continuity between the history of minority ethnic people in Wales and the more general history of black Britons (Fryer, 1984). There are also some important differences. In comparison with much of the UK, some of the black settlement in Wales is particularly long-standing. This is especially true of Cardiff, but also of smaller numbers of black families with a long history spread across Wales. Many of these are dual heritage families. As Williams (1999b) has observed, there are untold stories about those people in Wales who only show up on the census as 'other other'. There is also a long history of racism, overlooked in some romanticized visions of Wales. There were very serious racist riots in Cardiff just after the First World War (Evans, 1980) and anti-semitic riots in Tredegar in 1911 (Weitzman and Weitzman, 2000). Just as in the rest of the UK, there were Welsh families who made their money on the slave trade (Williams, 1999b). In recent years there have been some research projects on the experience of minority ethnic people in various parts of Wales, including those of Evans and Wood (1999) on Ely in Cardiff, Williams (1997) on Torfaen,

Robinson (1997) on refugees and Scourfield et al. (2002) on the South Wales valleys, but the empirical base is still fairly weak. Despite the relatively long history of minority ethnic people in Wales, there is a powerful legacy of 'Welshness' being seen to equate to whiteness (Williams, 1995). As noted above, large parts of Wales are indeed as much as 99 percent white. Indeed, the leader of the far right British National Party told *The Guardian* that he moved to mid Wales to escape multiethnic Britain (Toolis, 2000).

In terms of politics, there have been few positive developments in relation to minority representation. There have been no black or minority ethnic Assembly Members in the first term or second terms of the Welsh National Assembly. Chaney and Williams (2003) found the overwhelmingly majority of ethnic minority people they interviewed thought the Assembly had 'retarded rather than advanced race relations with government' (p. 213). These researchers also note, however, the 'unprecedented political commitment and positive measures' (p. 215) on behalf of the Assembly towards achieving the participation of minority ethnic people in government. An important issue in terms of the politics of 'race' in Wales has been the renewed language debate sparked by the forming of *Cymuned*, a lobby group campaigning for the preservation of Welsh-speaking communities. As Day (2002) notes, this debate has seen accusations of exclusivity and even racism being made on both sides. Although the arguments in this language debate are not primarily or overtly about 'race' they do involve a consideration of migration and cultural belonging that have implications for ethnic diversity, whatever position is taken in the debate (Williams, 2003). One of the founding principles of The National Assembly for Wales is equal opportunities (section 120 of the Government of Wales Act 1998) and most of the major political parties claim an interest in constructing a Welsh citizenship that is genuinely inclusive. We would argue that the discussion that follows is therefore of contemporary political relevance.

## THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The focus of the research project is children in what developmental psychologists term 'middle childhood'. In the Autumn of 2001, we spoke to 105 children aged between eight and 11 in six schools across Wales. The schools were selected as a purposive sample to provide a certain diversity of region, language, social class and ethnicity. Sampling was informed by linguistic data from the 1991 census and free school meal quotas from the National Assembly's school census for the primary sector. At this point we briefly introduce the six schools. All names and locations in the article are culturally appropriate pseudonyms.

English medium schools we visited were as follows: an inner-city Cardiff school with a multiethnic intake (Highfields); a school which serves a socially deprived council estate in the eastern valleys of South Wales (Petersfield); and a school in a bilingual area of Powys where between a quarter and a third of the population are able to speak Welsh (Llwynirfon). We also selected three Welsh medium schools: one in a largely anglophone area of North-east Wales (Ysgol y Waun); one in an area of rural Gwynedd where around three quarters of the local population speak Welsh (Ysgol y Porth); and one in a deprived area of the western valleys of South Wales where large numbers and a significant proportion of the population are able to speak Welsh (Ysgol Maesgarw).

Such a sample was of course not intended to be wholly representative of life in Wales: rather it was settled upon in order to take account of regional differences within Wales whilst simultaneously offering us the opportunity to explore diverse, marginalized and contested identities. It is worth noting that there is regional difference across Wales in terms of the politics of race. Only one of the schools, Highfields in Cardiff, is ethnically diverse to any extent, reflecting the population of Wales both numerically overall and also in terms of the regional concentration of minorities. This was a school that parents seemed to choose because of its cultural diversity. Bahira moved to the school when she started wearing a head scarf as she would have been the only one in her previous school. Joe's mother (Joe is white) chose the school because she thought it was 'not a racist school'. The 'problem' of English incomers noted earlier in the article is especially highlighted by language campaigners in the area surrounding the Gwynedd school, Ysgol y Porth.

We used solely qualitative research methods, namely focus groups (of six children, three groups in each school) and semi-structured interviews (nine in each school). Where children were bilingual Welsh-English they had a choice to participate in either language. In order to engage the children, we used some visual prompts such as a map, a video clip and postcards, and varied the style of discussion by using, for example, a sentence completion exercise and card-sorting.

For the card sorting exercise we asked children, in focus groups, to choose identity label cards that described them. The batches of cards included the labels Welsh person, English person, British person, European, from Cardiff (or other named local area), black, white, Asian, boy, girl, religion (several) and 'you choose'. This last card was blank, and children could add any other identity label they wanted. We wanted to know what children thought about nationally dominant collective identifications with place. We calculated that we could not list all potential ethnic/national categories and keep the children engaged, so we had to add this blank card for minority identities. We gave examples of how it could be used and the children were enthusiastic in adding extra identities



on this card. We described their choice as a 'secret vote' in so far as their classmates did not need to know what they had chosen if they wanted to keep it to themselves. We did, however, then invite any comments they wanted to make about each of the cards both in focus groups and interviews, and most children were happy to discuss their choices both with the interviewer and in front of their peers in the focus group. We also kept our own notes of their choices. The exercise proceeded in three stages:

1. Children decided which of the cards to keep – those which described them – and which to reject as not describing them.
2. They were asked to choose one card only from this batch that was the most important to them.
3. They were given back the whole set, asked to write on a card another thing that was very important to them, such as a person, pet, sports team or interest, and then choose between the entire set which was the most important.

It is important to record that we should not see our research project as attempting to reveal the one authentic voice of these children, as there can only be a 'multiplicity of authentic voices' (Connolly, 1997: 163). Van Ausdale and Feagan (2002) have observed that the presence of a 'sanctioning adult' will inevitably affect what research projects reveal about racialization. They write that 'when it comes to much research on race, the right answer the children are expected to give is that "we are all the same inside"' (p. 14). This message does indeed emerge in our data, as will be shown later in the article. We were also struck, however, by the extent to which unwitting racialization of Welshness emerged, and that some children were willing to conduct a conversation about national belonging that seemed naive to any discourse of political correctness about ethnicity.

The article discusses Welshness as racialized, children's views on being white and on being a minority, and evidence of inclusivity amongst children. We start with the various ways in which the children see the Welsh nation as racialized, before moving on to consider the ways in which particular regions are seen as having a 'racial' character.

## RACIALIZED WELSHNESS

Any idea of the nation is about drawing boundaries, and immediately brings up the question of belonging and who is an insider, who an outsider. As David McCrone puts it, '[n]ationalism has particularism built into it;



hence every “us” has to have a “them”’ (McCrone, 1998: 116). As soon as the issue of nationality comes on the agenda there are questions to be asked about who can rightly claim it. In popular understanding of nationality, race is usually among the criteria for a rightful claim. It should also be acknowledged that there is nothing inevitable about the relationship between race and nation and that this is an area of political and academic debate, but the process of ascribing nationality can be seen as conceptually close to the process of ascribing race. The children we spoke to tended to talk in terms of people having either full- or half-Welsh status. This is usually decided for them by place of birth or more likely by the nationality of their parents (with parents’ nationality usually thought by the children to be about their place of birth), so for most of these children, having an English parent and a Welsh one means you are half Welsh and half English. In some conversations, such as the excerpt below, half-Welsh status is awarded on different grounds, but the commonest approach was recourse to parents’ nationality. Some children with mixed heritage calculated this in a complex way and told us they were ‘a quarter’ of one nationality, for example. Ascribing this fractional and full-Welsh status is conceptually close to racial categorization, as we see here where Sian connects this concept with being ‘half caste’.

- Andrew (researcher): What does it mean then to be Welsh, you know when somebody says what nationality, you say Welsh, what goes through your mind when you say that?
- Aimee: You were born in Wales.
- Andrew: Yeah, could somebody who wasn’t born in Wales be Welsh?
- Unidentified child: Yeah.
- Aimee: Um . . . no.
- Sian: They can be half Welsh.
- Andrew: Yeah.
- Sian: Yeah, they can be half. There is a girl in our class called Joanne she’s half caste isn’t she?

(Focus group in Petersfield School)

The legacy of Welshness being equated with whiteness has already been mentioned. Our most vivid illustration of this comes from 11-year-old Dafydd, who would not want to be black since to him that would mean being English. Blackness is not only a challenge to whiteness here, but it is associated with a land beyond the border, so is doubly the Other. England and Wales are both racialized.

- Andrew (researcher): What about being white? Does that mean anything to you?
- Dafydd: Means nothing that much (.) I’m glad I’m white because I don’t want to be like a black person and ‘cause I’d probably be an English person then.

Andrew: Yeah. Are there black Welsh people?  
 Dafydd: I don't know, I haven't seen any that much.  
 (Interview with Dafydd from Ysgol Maes Garw)

Whilst this particularly vivid quotation is a politicized researcher's dream, and it might have been tempting to entitle this article something like 'If I was Black I'd be English' to powerfully make the point that Wales is seen as a white country, we should not get too carried away with this one quotation. There are in fact competing notions of Welshness evident in our data, as will be seen as the article progresses, and there are dangers in reading too much into what is in some respects an ambiguous statement.

One quite clearly racialized aspect of children's experience in Wales is education. It is nothing unusual in the UK for schools to be segregated according to ethnicity (Tomlinson, 1997). Even the ethnically diverse school we studied in Cardiff, around half of whose pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds, seems to be chosen by some parents (and not only white parents) in preference to the very largely Asian primary school nearby. One difference between Wales and the rest of the UK is the existence of Welsh medium education. There are not yet any comparative statistics available on the ethnic origin of pupils in Welsh primary schools, but the authors' impression, at least on the basis of Welsh medium schools in Cardiff, the Welsh county with the highest proportion of minority ethnic people, is that Welsh medium schools are generally much whiter than English medium schools (with the proviso that some English medium schools are also almost totally white).

Bahira (who describes herself as a British Muslim) says, in the excerpt below, that she would not want to go to a Welsh medium school because of the lack of minority ethnic children, meaning potential racism.

Because they [children in Welsh school] might be racists or something, I don't know and I don't like Welsh. I hate Welsh [. . .] Yeah, because there is probably not one person who is Muslim there because not many Muslims are fluent in Welsh, like. (Interview with Bahira from Highfields School)

To put this in context, this same child was also concerned about people being 'more racist' in England and in London specifically than in Cardiff, with London being more racist because it is 'busier'. She observes that not many Muslims are fluent in Welsh, which is true enough. It is not surprising that Muslims who have moved to Wales within the last century are unlikely to speak fluent Welsh. Although some Muslim migration to Wales – particularly by Somalis and Yemenis – dates back to the early 20th-century, much has also been more recent. Cardiff, where most of these Muslims settled, has always had a low proportion of Welsh speakers, although in recent decades it has acquired relatively large absolute numbers of Welsh speakers, many of whom are members of the new Welsh speaking 'bourgeoisie' (Aitchison and Carter, 1999).

As well as this practical point about language use in minority ethnic communities, however, we of course need to consider racialized discourses of the nation, of Welshness and belonging (see Williams, 1995, 1999a, 1999b). So, as Williams observes, the cultural nationalist ideology of the *gwerin*, meaning the (Welsh-speaking and rural) Welsh people (or folk) serves to exclude migrants who are not Welsh speakers from notions of 'true' Welshness:<sup>1</sup>

'gwerin' is essentially an appeal to a notion of cultural homogeneity and embodies a vision of culture and identity which is essentialist, static and based on ethnic absolutism. (Williams, 1999a: 78)

And Wales is also racialized in situations where people are not aware of consciously racialized ideologies. Living in a very largely white community leads children to imagine their community as homogenous in terms of ethnicity. Although there has in fact been considerable migration in and out of Wales for centuries (Jenkins, 1997), even in areas generally seen as having stable and culturally homogenous populations such as the South Wales valleys (Scourfield et al., 2002), large parts of Wales have come to be constructed as white, with this whiteness having particular overtones of social class (see Bonnett, 2000).

The whiteness of Welsh medium schools is reflected by Chloe in the following excerpt. Even though she lives in a part of Wales (the western valleys) that has a 98–99 percent white population, so there would be very few minority ethnic children in any schools, she is nonetheless aware that English medium schools are blacker than Welsh medium schools.

- Andrew: Pa fath o blant sy'n mynd i ysgolion fel'na?  
(What type of children go to schools like that? [English medium schools])
- Chloe: Plant sydd ddim yn siarad Cymraeg.  
(Children who don't speak Welsh.)
- Andrew: Ie. Ydyn nhw'n wahanol i blant fan hyn neu ydyn nhw'r un peth?  
(Yeah. Are they different from children here or are they the same?)
- Chloe: Yr un peth.  
(The same.)
- Andrew: Oes unrhyw beth yn wahanol amdany'n nhw?  
(Is there anything different about them?)
- Chloe: Mae nhw'n gallu bod yn (.) plant du.  
(They could be black children.)
- Andrew: Oes'na blant du sy'n dod i ysgolion Cymraeg?  
(Are there black children that go to Welsh [medium] schools?)
- Chloe: Na.  
(No.)

(Interview with Chloe from Ysgol Maes Garw)

There was very frequent collapsing of language ability and identity across the whole sample of children: being Welsh and speaking Welsh, being

English and speaking English. This is to be expected in the context of the generally close relationship found in surveys of national identity between the ability to speak the Welsh language and identification with the label 'Welsh' (Heath, 2003) and the historical connection between Welsh nationalist politics and Welsh speaking communities. In the Welsh language there is genuine confusion where the terms for Welsh and English nationality (*Cymro*, *Cymraes*, *Cymry*, *Cymraeg*, *Saes*, *Saesnes*, *Saeson*, *Saesneg*) have traditionally referred to language use. Although the meanings of these terms are changing, they still have strong implications of language use for many Welsh speakers. The increasing use of the expression *Cymro di-Gymraeg* (literally Welshman without the Welsh language) is, however, a sign that the questions of language and national identity are rather more open than they once were. In terms of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) the collapsing of language and nation occurs on an everyday level in the English language too when children refer to Welsh medium schools as 'Welsh schools' and English medium schools as 'English'. This collapsing of language and identity does of course have 'racial' implications, when minority ethnic Welsh people are less likely to be Welsh speakers. Hierarchies of Welshness according to language ability are problematic in relation to any attempts to develop an inclusive Welsh citizenship.

An interesting example of a hierarchy of belonging was seen in a focus group in Highfields School, where Cerys, who described herself as 'mixed race' and also as 'African' rejected the 'Welsh' card in the first stage of the card sorting exercise, to be corrected by Wasim, who said 'yes you are' on the basis of her having a conspicuously Welsh-sounding name. She was not swayed by Wasim, but in fact distanced herself from her name by saying 'my father gave it to me'. Here a black child was seen by another in the class as able to claim a Welsh identity on the basis of a culturally authentic name (as opposed to an English-sounding or black-sounding name). In a similar vein, Melissa, a white child, who consistently struck an inclusive note in discussions on nationality (see 'inclusive Wales' below) justified black people's claim to Welshness at one point with reference to Welsh speaking.

I visit Ponty a lot on a shopping day or something on Saturday after dancing, so I go there then and there's not much of a mixture so (.) like black people and white people. I mostly see white people so I don't think that that's fair. So I don't like it and I want black people to live there because some speak Welsh like and then like I like having a conversation in Welsh I do. I think it is really good like. (Interview with Melissa from Petersfield School)

Whilst we did not specifically ask questions about the children's view of Welsh history, there were a couple of incidental references to the Celts from children in Welsh medium schools. These are in effect references to the racial history of Wales. In one case this is used to differentiate Wales from England, and in another it is used to invoke common origins with France.

In the first excerpt, the children refer to the Celts pre-dating the Romans in the British Isles and thus Wales pre-dating England as a 'nation'. This is an interesting projection of the notion of nationhood (based on ethnicity) onto what we might call a 'pre-national' historical context. History is, of course, often used by nationalist movements in this way. These excerpts illustrate the caution that is needed with such history as children can potentially take away ideas about essentialist racial origins. This is not of course the sole responsibility of teachers – such discourses are also found in simplistic media portrayals of Wales.

Leanne: Mae Cymru'n mwy o gwlad na fel Lloegr.  
(Wales is more of a country than like England.)

Andrew: Siwd'ny, 'te? [Sut?  
(How's that then? [How?])

Rachel: [Dwi'n meddwl mae ganddo fo hanesion mwy achos mae ganddo  
nhw y Rhufeiniaid a 'dan ni (.) mae ganddo ni y Celtiaid.  
([I think it's got more history because they've got the Romans and  
we've (.) we've got the Celts.)

(Focus group in Ysgol y Waun)

Andrew: Beth mae pobl fel yn Ffrainc?  
(What are people like in France?)

Llinos: Siarad Ffrangeg, siarad Saesneg ac . . .  
(Speak French, speak English and . . .)

Andrew: Beth bydden nhw'n meddwl am bobl o Gymru?  
(What would they think about people from Wales?)

Llinos: Maen nhw'n debyg i ni achos maen nhw'n Celtiaid.  
(They're similar because they're Celts.)

(Interview with Llinos, Ysgol y Porth: square brackets here denote when people are speaking over each other.)

## REGIONAL RACIAL WALES

Skin colour is used as a marker of regional difference within Wales by some children. Interestingly, it is used as a marker of difference even where the children's knowledge of different areas is not good. So two children thought that when travelling towards the middle of Wales from where they lived (one in the North and one in the South) you would start to see black people. This is not particularly true, as the minority ethnic population of mid Wales is very small and dispersed. What is interesting is that these two boys thought of skin colour when trying to imagine what could distinguish people in different parts of Wales. One of the boys quoted below, Joseph, said the same about travelling to London and to France. In a similar way, and much more frequently than reference to skin colour, children mentioned language and accent as markers of difference, even where their geographical knowledge in this respect was vague or inaccurate.



Nathan: Some people would talk different and some people might be (.) coloured or things like that.

Andrew: Where would that start to happen then, do you think?

Nathan: Somewhere round there.

Andrew: Somewhere round the middle [of Wales], yeah? OK.

(Interview with Nathan from Ysgol y Waun)

Andrew: If you're going up this way then, OK there's Ammanford and Llandeilo and all the way up here into the middle of Wales. OK, where do you think people would start speaking different to you? Start moving this way.

Joseph: Might go (.) some people could be black.

(Interview with Joseph from Ysgol Maes Garw)

Some children also racialized their own areas – this part of Wales is white. When asked what he thought about the 'white' card, Llyr, from Ysgol y Porth in North-west Wales (a town we have named Bryntawel) replied 'wel, dyna be 'di lliw ni rownd fan'ma' (well, that's what our colour is round here). Haf, from the same school, thought she was happy to be white, 'oherwydd lliw yna 'dwi, a mae'na lot o bobl o Bryntawel yn gwyn' (because that's the colour I am, and there's a lot of people from Bryntawel are white). Maes Garw in the western valleys was also seen by the children as very white, to the extent that Rowland felt he needed to point out in a focus group when various minority identities were mentioned that 'Chinese people live down here in the Chinese shop'. These people were worthy of mention precisely because they were thought to be so unusual. Llanhywel in the eastern valleys was also seen as a white place. People in *Eastenders* are different from people in Llanhywel because they have a 'different colour skin', we were told in a focus group. Cardiff, on the other hand, the nearest city, was seen as multicultural by children in Llanhywel. Melissa embraces this, and Jason sounds more wary, not thinking the Muslims in Cardiff are really part of *his* country.

I do like living in Llanhywel. Llanhywel is a bit [recording unclear] but um (.) like they are a bit the same. I have walked round Cardiff and seen people speaking Welsh. There is black people there and white people as well. There is a mixture. That is what I like about it. (Interview with Melissa from Petersfield School)

Andrew: Are people different in Cardiff than here do you think?

Jason: Maybe Muslims live in Cardiff (.) there would be loads of things, it would be all right.

Andrew: Yeah, are there Muslims in Llanhywel at all?

Jason: No (.) no way.

Andrew: No? What do you think people from Cardiff would think about people from Llanhywel, do you think that they would like them?

Jason: Yes if they have ever been down here.

Andrew: Do you think the Muslims in Cardiff would like to visit Llanhywel?

Jason: No (.) don't know (.) they would go to their country.

(Interview with Jason in Petersfield School)

## BEING WHITE

There is a wealth of data from our project on white children talking about national and local identities that we do not present in this article but have written about elsewhere (see Scourfield and Davies, in press and Scourfield et al., 2004). At this point, though, it is worth saying something about what whiteness meant to the children. As previously mentioned, we included the label 'white' in our card-sorting exercise. Most children said it meant 'nothing much' to them to be white. Whiteness is taken for granted by these children, so they have not had to stop and think about what it might mean. Of those who were positive about being white, they had no reason to give beyond this being the dominant skin colour in their local area. Unsurprisingly, it was more difficult to own up to liking being white. As Rowland put it in a focus group at Ysgol Maes Garw 'I didn't want to pick white because then that would be a racist comment'. In the following excerpt, several children initially say it is important to be white but this is challenged. Lindsay thinks it is important enough to challenge it that she switches to English (her first language). The children are all white, although Gianni describes himself more than once as 'brown' (he says his Italian father is very brown).

- Andrew: O reit, OK. Beth am fod yn wyn'te (.) ydy hwnna'n bwysig i unrhyw un?  
(Oh right OK. What about being white then (.) Is that important to anyone?)
- Voices: Ydy.  
(Yes it is.)
- Andrew: Ydy?  
(It is?)
- Lindsay: Wel, dwi ddim (.) ddim lliw fi (.) wel (.)  
(Well I'm not (.) not my colour (.) well (.) )
- Gianni: Dim bwys.  
(No importance.)
- Caryl: Dwi'n licio bod yn gwyn 'de ond ddim ond lliw [yw gwyn  
(I like being white but it's only a colour, white.)
- Lindsay: [Achos (.) . . .) Can I say in?  
(Because (.) . . .) Can I say in?)
- Andrew: Yeah, go on – say it in English.
- Lindsay: The colour doesn't matter – it's just what's inside that counts.
- Gianni: I'm a bit brown as well in me because my (.) I could have been a brown child.
- Andrew: So this . . . this isn't really – is it important or isn't it?
- Gianni: Not really.  
(Focus group in Ysgol y Porth)

There are also instances of children saying they are glad they are white because black children have a difficult time due to racism. Jane from Ysgol y

Porth told us it was important (but not very important) to be white because black people get treated badly.

## BEING A MINORITY

The perspectives of the minority ethnic children on identity were very interesting, and have important implications for attempts in political and cultural life to construct an inclusive notion of Welshness. The number of minority ethnic children was small (11) and all except one came from one school, Highfields in Cardiff, so caution is of course needed in drawing conclusions, but it was nonetheless revealing that not one of these children used the term 'Welsh' as an umbrella identity. One child, Wasim, mentioned the term Welsh for himself but alongside other alternative identities, such as Muslim and Italian. The avoidance of Welsh as an umbrella term might reflect ideas about alternative nationalities – that you cannot be simultaneously Pakistani and Welsh for example. Interestingly, some were content to describe themselves as British (e.g. 'British Muslim') and refer to 'their country' as Britain.

The table below shows the identities that children in Highfields School chose in the card-sorting exercise. We have grouped the children in their focus groups to show any interactional dimension to their choices: how they may have influenced each other. We have identified the white children to facilitate comparison with the other children, who are from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. We do not mean to suggest that the white children are a homogenous group. They were not, as there were children born and brought up in England as well as Wales and also a child with an Australian parent. It is worth repeating at this point the exercise the children were asked to complete. They were asked to keep only the one most important card from a batch that included various nationalities, sex, local identity, colour (white/black), religion and a choice card. Following this initial choice, they were then given back all cards and asked to add in something else that was important to them, such as a person, pet or hobby, and to choose between the entire set of cards which was the most important of all. As can be seen from the table, some children maintained their original choice in the second round but most changed between rounds. Some re-thought their original choice and selected for the second vote something that was already available to them first time around.

We do not present this table in order to quantify the choices and make grand claims from any comparison, bearing in mind the small numbers, purposive sample and the contingent nature of such identities. Nonetheless it is interesting that only three children, all of whom were white, chose the



**Table 1** Identity choices in Highfields School, Cardiff

Focus group 1	Name	Edward (white)	Muhammad	Sion (white)	Nim	Bahira	Shamsa
	1st round of cards	Australian	Muslim	Welsh	Girl	British Muslim	Somali Muslim
	2nd round of cards	Cardiff City FC	Muslim	Hockey club	Religion	Religion	My country (Britain) and my family
Focus group 2	Name	Stephen (white)	Satnaam	Nicola (white)	Julia (white)	Ashid	
	1st round of cards	From Blackmill (area of Cardiff)	Asian	From Birmingham	British	Black	
	2nd round of cards	England football	Pet fish	Family, Mam and Dad	Clothes, hair and stuff	Muslim	
Focus group 3	Name	Wasim	Zubaida	Sabirah	Danny (white)	Joe (white)	Cerys
	1st round of cards	From Cardiff	Muslim	Muslim	Welsh	Welsh	African
	2nd round of cards	Playing wrestling with my sister	Pakistani	My family and grandparents	David Beckham	Welsh	My dad

'Welsh' card. This card was by far the most popular in the other five schools. In keeping with the tendency for contemporary ethnic identities to be hybrid and complex (Mac An Ghaill, 1999), there is relatively little commonality across the children's choices. Only minority ethnic children chose religion as important. There is very interesting material in the table about gender, with the boys tending to choose something sport-related in round two and the girls more focused on the importance of family. We have expanded on the gendered character of children's national identity work in a separate publication (see Scourfield and Davies, in press).

Despite the minority children's reluctance to claim Welshness, there were examples in every school of white children telling us that of course black people are included in Welshness (see the section 'Inclusive Wales' later); the scope of their stated conception of Welshness was inclusive. There is an interesting exchange in one of the Highfields focus groups where Nim (Cardiff-born, Chinese parents) and Edward (Cardiff-born to Scottish mother and Australian father) are in the process of considering inclusive Welshness and negotiating the criteria:

- Andrew: No, right great. What about being Welsh, is that important to anyone?  
 Nim: Yes it is.  
 Identity unclear: No.  
 Edward: I am not particularly Welsh.  
 Sion: It is important. [to Edward] Where were you born?  
 Edward: Cardiff (.) I don't have any Welsh blood.  
 Sion: Yeah you are 'cos you were born here.  
 Nim: Some people say I'm Welsh, some people I'm from Cardiff.  
 Andrew: What do you say you are?  
 Nim: I say I'm from Cardiff but at the same time I like to think I'm Welsh.

(From focus group in Highfields School)

Nim seems to be aware of both inclusive and exclusive notions of Welshness. She shows that she can in theory be considered Welsh and is interested in applying this label to herself. Her tentative 'some people say' and 'I like to think' make it clear she knows that this inclusive version of Welshness would also be contested by some.

Another interesting aspect of minority identities from our research was the contesting of whiteness by some children. It was noted above that Gianni, a child with an Italian father and white British mother, described himself more than once as 'brown' in the context of the labels 'white' and 'black' being available. Gemma, a girl with a slightly darker skin than the others, whose heritage we were not aware of but who was not thought of by school staff as a minority ethnic child, also describes herself as brown with confidence. There are multiple discourses of race evident here – a racialized comment from Gemma about black people, the assumption of

whiteness as normal (I'm not any colour) and a universalist comment – it doesn't matter what colour you are.

Andrew: What about being white and being black then?

Emma: It doesn't matter.

Paula: It doesn't matter what colour you are.

Gemma: If you are black you have got more rhythm. But I'm not both, I'm just brown.

Paula: And me.

Emma: I'm not any colour.

Jack: No you're not, you're white.

Gemma: No I'm not, I'm brown.

Jack: I'm white.

Gemma: I'm brown, I'm definitely brown.

(From focus group in Petersfield School)

## INCLUSIVE WALES

Despite the racialized discourses of Welsh identity that were mentioned earlier in the article, there was also evidence in every school of children contesting these narrow definitions of the nation. This contestation does not take away from the exclusion felt by many black and minority ethnic people in Wales, but it does suggest that there is hope for a more inclusive Welsh citizenship. This is not a particularly naive universalism that the children are proclaiming either, as many of these comments are made in the context of observations about racism. There are examples of children spotting racism and rejecting it.

Phillip: My gran would say she's British. She's glad to be white (.) she's racist. I hate I hate it when she says things like that.  
(Focus group in Ysgol Maes Garw)

Joanna: Because some white people go out with black people or they are best friends and it's unfair to make fun of them, because you wouldn't like it if you was black and then say someone made fun of a black person they wouldn't like it if they were black and a white person made fun of them.

Melissa: Um (.) long ago, right um (.) English and black people used to not go near each other because they used to fight each other. There is no point, because they are same whether they are black or white, they are the same inside.

Andrew: Yeah.

David: Like the Taliban they probably done that for a reason because they are black and they are proud of it and they don't like the white people.

Unidentified child: Yeah.

Sean: Black and white people still got the same blood.  
 Joanna: They still feel the same  
 (Focus group in Petersfield School)

Children in Petersfield come across as especially aware of racism, with several comments about understanding where the Taliban are coming from. These focus groups took place during the Afghanistan war in late 2001, and it is likely that teachers had discussed this with children in the school. In no other school were sympathetic comments made about the Taliban. It may be that a special effort has been made in Petersfield as there had been organized racist activity in the area recently. It is a school in a virtually all-white area, as were all those we visited with the exception of the Cardiff school.

There were frequent comments of a generally universalising nature made by the children, albeit comments that suggest a case needs to be argued and blackness is (at least potentially) stigmatized.

Andrew: Beth am gwyn' te ydi o'n bwysig i fod yn wyn neu?  
 (What about white then, is it important to be white or?)

Several: Na.  
 (No.)

Nerys: Does dim ots pa lliw wyt ti  
 (It doesn't matter what colour you are.)

(Focus group in Ysgol Maes Garw)

Julia: No. (.) They just the same person they can be as nice as white people as well.

(Interview with Julia from Highfields School)

Andrew: Okay, what about being black or white then, is that important or?

(General): No, not really.

Sian: It depends on what's on the inside.

(Focus group in Petersfield School)

There were also inclusive comments made by the children we spoke to about Wales specifically. Other studies have found similar inclusiveness in studies of children's views of the nation. Howard and Gill's (2001) qualitative research in Australia found the scope of Australian citizenship to be inclusive to the children they interviewed and Carrington and Short (1995), in surveying children about Britishness, reported the fairly optimistic finding that few children made racialized distinctions about belonging to the British nation. It was noted above that attempts were made by white children to include minority ethnic children within their notion of Welshness even where the minority children themselves were reluctant to go along with this. A few comments were made about an inclusive Wales when we showed a video clip of the Welsh national anthem at a Wales v. France rugby international, to prompt discussion, as there were black players in the team that was lined up during the anthem.

- Andrew: What did you think of that when you were watching it?  
Melissa: I think we should be proud of where we live, and who we live with  
and your family (.) if we are black or not.  
Joanna: They play for Wales and some of them are black.  
(Focus group in Petersfield School)

It seems to be the case that white children are aware of the potential for black and minority ethnic people to be excluded or feel excluded from mainstream notions of Welshness. There is a feeling that, at least in the virtually all-white schools we visited (such as Petersfield above), the children need to argue the case for black people being 'Welsh too', rather than taking it as a given. This was seen in the earlier excerpts where black people were co-opted into Welshness on the basis of having a 'Welsh-sounding' name or speaking the Welsh language. In Highfields School where ethnic diversity was an everyday reality for the children there was less evidence of them having to work hard to justify an inclusive Wales. The fact that the children seem aware that Wales is traditionally a white concept is perhaps evidence of the resilience of this version of the nation. The children are not naive in proclaiming universality but are consciously contesting a version of Wales they do not like. In this sense, even an inclusive version of Wales is necessarily racialized in so far as the children are conscious of race and are consciously marking out clear water between their version and more traditional and perhaps more mainstream exclusive versions of the nation.

## DISCUSSION

Although we have noted racialized discourses of Welsh identity, we can also report evidence of children resisting exclusive conceptions of national belonging and constructing broader more inclusive alternatives. Amongst the existing published research on children and ethnicity we can similarly find both pessimistic findings, such as explicit racism in very young children (Connolly, 1998; Van Ausdale and Feagin, 2002) and also more optimistic material on inclusivity (Carrington and Short, 1995; Howard and Gill, 2001). There are multiple voices here, as Connolly (1997) notes in relation to research on racialization.

What do the aspects of our research findings we have presented in this article tell us about how children negotiate ethnicity and national identity? As a corrective to what were perceived as passive models of socialization and deficit models of childhood from traditional sociological approaches and from developmental psychology, there has been increasing emphasis in recent sociological studies on children's agency and sophistication, and on the importance of their interaction with peers. Van Ausdale and Feagan, for

example, emphasize these perspectives in their research on racism in children:

In our analysis, young children are no less able than adults to interact and learn from interaction. Within the contexts of interaction they deliberate and decide on actions, often of a very sophisticated kind. (2002: 19)

We were able to observe some interaction in the relatively artificial environment of focus groups, and we discuss the role of gendered interaction in the negotiation of national identities in a separate article (Scourfield and Davies, in press), but we cannot claim to have any depth of insight into how children 'do' race in everyday interaction because of the relative brevity of our time with these children and the presence of a sanctioning adult (Van Ausdale and Feagan, 2002). We can, however, make some comment on the role of agency in the everyday construction of the nation, from the data we have.

What we see in many of the data excerpts in the article is the children echoing a limited range of received ideas about the Welsh nation. This is not necessarily because they are children, with less developed cognition or social awareness, but because all that most of us, of whatever age, have available to us is a limited repertoire, derived from the dominant discourses of the nation. The children demonstrate agency where they consciously dismiss exclusive notions of nationality and insist on a multiethnic Welshness (although this is no less of a received idea). What is revealing is that when the children apply this inclusiveness to Wales specifically (as opposed to more general comments about people being all the same inside), it tends to be framed within a traditional and exclusive discourse. So, for example, black people are Welsh too because some speak Welsh or play rugby for Wales, or a black child deserves the label Welsh because she has a Welsh-sounding name.

How active can children or adults be in relation to something that is out of their reach? The influence that ordinary people have over the discursive construction of the nation is very limited. Certainly the ongoing reproduction of the nation works through human interaction, but all that most of us have to go on is available discourse. This may be slightly more open for academic and cultural adult elites who are actively engaged in debating nationhood, but even for these people, dominant discourses of the nation have to be contended with and either accepted or rejected. They cannot be bypassed. We would suggest that it is as legitimate to emphasize here the limitations on children's agency (and that of adults) in doing national identity as it is to emphasize their active role. What is more evident from our data is not how active these children are in negotiating Welshness, but how constrained they are by a limited range of ideas about national belonging.

The question needs to be asked as to whether Welshness could be said to be *more* racialized than, for example, Britishness. Of course no grand

claims can be made either way on the basis of this project with no comparative data. It is nonetheless an interesting question to ask. Are the terms 'British Muslim' or 'Black British' easier to use than the Welsh equivalents? If so, the same could of course no doubt be said about the use of 'English' in this context. Although it has been criticized for many things, including its associations with England, the concept of Britishness is perhaps vague enough to encompass ethnic hybridity such as the term 'British Muslim'. Crucially, Wales is a country with a very small overall minority ethnic population and we might expect more traditional associations of Welshness with whiteness across much of the country, in comparison with other more diverse parts of the UK. The racialization of the nation is of course highly regionally specific, however. If we had done our research in virtually all-white parts of England we may well have encountered something similar. It would also not be surprising if in an English city as multiethnic as Cardiff we were to find children having recourse to exclusive discourses of nationhood to justify why black people can also be British.

It is certainly true that there is work that needs to be done if we are to build an inclusive Wales. As May (2001) observes, there is a tendency for people to believe that in Wales there are only English people, Welsh people and long-standing assimilated ethnic minorities. May goes on to say that 'the new conception of Welshness apparent in Wales has yet to be extended to the formal recognition of the cultural and linguistic histories of its various ethnic minorities' (p. 269). Graham Day (2002: 242) is optimistic in writing that 'it is reasonable to suppose that, as Wales has become a more diverse and fragmented place, so the number of possible varieties of Welshness have increased'. Our data suggest that amongst the children we spoke to, Welshness is being contested, but this contesting tends to be framed within a traditional version of Wales.

## CONCLUSION

We have presented some insights into children's 'race' talk in Welsh schools, based on our qualitative research on national and local identities. We have highlighted aspects of the data where children spoke about Wales as racialized, either to support such an image of Wales or to contest it. There are examples of children uncritically seeing their Wales as white and also examples of white children wanting to contest a white Wales and instead construct an inclusive nation. In these latter instances there is a sense that the children are aware that a case for inclusivity needs to be argued against a traditional white model, sometimes using traditional ideas of cultural authenticity to argue their case. The limited data we have on the views of black and minority ethnic children indicate a reluctance to claim Welshness

and in particular a reluctance to use 'Welsh' as an umbrella identity within which other ethnic identities can be expressed. There is material here to argue a pessimistic case about Welsh identity as narrow, exclusive and still tending to whiteness. There is also evidence from the research that could support the potential for an inclusive citizenship in Wales to be developed. This topic certainly requires further investigation. Qualitative and quantitative research on a bigger sample of black and minority ethnic children in Wales in particular could be very useful to expand our knowledge base and inform policy makers.

### **Acknowledgements**

We are very grateful to all the children who agreed to take part in the study. The research reported in the article was dependent on the funding of the University of Wales Board of Celtic Studies' Social Science Committee. Other members of the research team were Bella Dicks, Sally Holland and Mark Drakeford. Maire Messenger-Davies and Catherine Maclean gave valuable help on research design.

### **Note**

- 1 Whilst the term *gwerin* is contested, it is still used commonly enough. For example, the Welsh Folk Museum in St Fagans became the Museum of Welsh Life in 1995 but kept *gwerin* in its Welsh language title *Amgueddfa Werin Cymru*.

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